

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 are presently pending in the application.

Applicants are pleased to note the Examiner's acknowledgement of the priority document, the withdrawal of the objection to the specification, and the withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 from the prior Office Action.

However, the Examiner has maintained the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,849,105 of Massaux et al. ("Massaux") for the reasons of record. In response to Applicant's arguments in response to the previous Office Action, the Examiner points out that Massaux discloses the use of a thickening agent in the composition, specifically a polycarboxylate thickener added to the premix of the composition to promote uniformity (col. 10, lines 1-14). Applicants apologize for having overlooked this disclosure in Massaux. Nevertheless, the rejection is respectfully but strenuously traversed for the reasons set forth below, in so far as it may be applied to the presently amended claims.

Claims 1 and 11 have been amended to specify that the cleaning agent is one which is applied to a glass ceramic surface of a cooker hob. This feature is supported, for example, in paragraph [0022] of the specification. In addition, claim 1 has been amended to specify that the pH value of the cleaning agent is about 2 to 3. This feature of the claims is supported, for example, in paragraph [0026] of the specification. Finally, claims 12 and 13 have been amended to conform the preamble to the amendment to claim 1. No new matter has been added by these amendments and entry is respectfully requested.

In view of the above Amendments, the claims are clearly not anticipated by the compositions or methods of Massaux. Thus, in contrast to the vary acid pH of the presently claimed compositions, Massaux teaches a nearly neutral pH of about 4.5 to about 5 for its liquid crystal formulations (see col. 9, lines 25-30). Moreover, while Massaux teaches that its liquid crystal formulations may be applied to hard surfaces, such as dishes, walls or floors, from which lipophilic soil is to be removed, Massaux does not teach or suggest a cleaning agent for cooker hob glass ceramic surfaces as presently claimed.

The Examiner has previously taken the position that even if the surfaces disclosed by Massaux are different from the glass ceramic surfaces cleaned by the composition and method of the present invention, a different intended use does not render the composition patentable unless there is a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art.

First of all, even assuming that this position of the Examiner is correct with respect to composition claims, which Applicants do not agree, it is certainly not correct with respect to method claim 11, which clearly requires applying the composition to a glass ceramic surface of a cooker hob. In any event, the claims now specify a clear structural difference between the claimed composition and that of Massaux, namely a highly acid pH compared to the nearly neutral pH of the Massaux formulations.

The compositions and method of the presently claimed invention require not only an abrasive agent for removal of largely food-based residues which can accumulate on cooker hobs, but surprisingly also require a low (acid) pH. Thus, while the cleaning agents according to the present invention provide excellent residue removal due to their abrasive content, the acidic pH has been found to minimize corrosion of the glass ceramic composition of cooker hob surfaces. Such corrosion can occur from cleaning agents used over the repeated (often extreme) heating-cooling cycles encountered by cooker hob surfaces.

Not only does Massaux fail to disclose the low pH of the presently claimed invention, but since Massaux does not teach or suggest the cleaning of glass ceramic surfaces of cooking hobs, Massaux does not even recognize or consider the requirements or problems of cleaning agents for such surfaces, including the problem of corrosion of the ceramic glass surfaces by some cleaning agents over repeated heating-cooling cycles of the surfaces. Accordingly, the presently claimed invention is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by Massaux, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are therefore respectfully requested.

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In view of the above Amendments and Remarks, it is submitted that all of the claims in the application patentably distinguish over the prior art of record. Reconsideration and an early Notice of Allowance are respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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